



# CHECKING YOUR PEER NETWORK'S PURPOSE

**Losing momentum is a good time to check in on the Why? of the peer network. Your network might have had the “why?” conversation when the network first started, but maybe your network has not asked the question for a while, or maybe there are new people who have not been part of that conversation. Having the “why?” conversation again can help you get clear on your statement of purpose.**

## How to develop a statement of purpose

**A statement of purpose is one or two lines that describe your group. It says what good things people can expect if they come along to the peer network. This is important if the group wants to attract new members. So the statement should really highlight something that peers can relate to, enjoy and benefit from.**

### Start with your own thinking

Why was the network established in the first place?

What value does it currently bring to the peers?

Could the network offer something else, something new or different to peers who are already coming or to new peers?

### Talk with the peers in the network and peers in your community

Start by asking some of these questions:

- “Why do we have this peer network?” “What are WE all about?”
- “Why are we here?” (What’s our purpose?)
- “What do we value as a group?” (What’s important to us?)
- “What do we offer each other?” (How can we best help each other?)

For peers who are not part of the network ask them why, and what would make them want to come? Ask them for their ideas for a peer network. You could open a Facebook chat page for people not comfortable talking in groups or run a poll on Instagram to ask people what they think about a network.

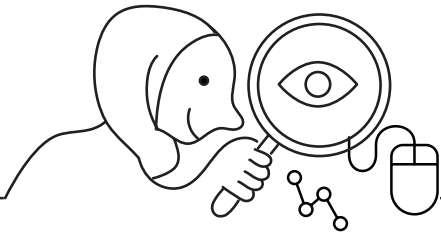
### Talk with people around your community

Community organisations, community development officers, community groups, and any others you can think of.

### Think about gaps

What is missing for your peers in your community?

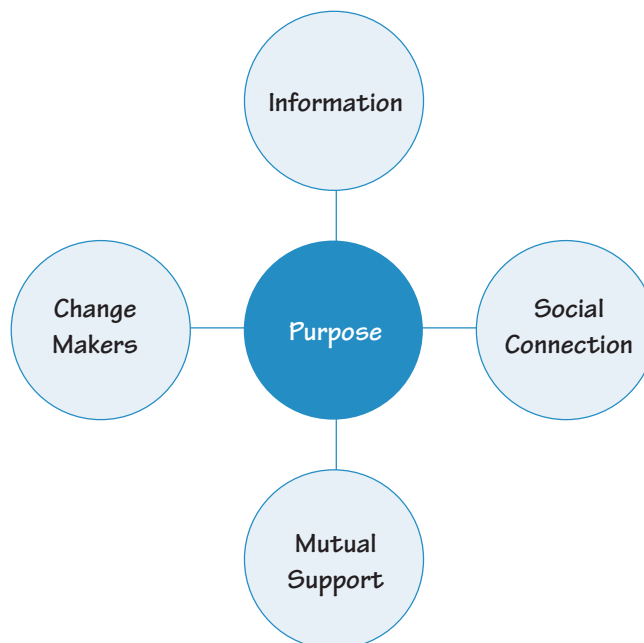
What can the peer network do about that gap?



### Be open to ideas and really listen to what people want

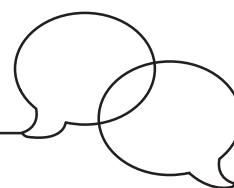
When you have gathered all your information, sit down with the peers in the group and look it over and see if there are things that keep coming up – what is MOST wanted from a peer network in your community?

You could use a drawing, or sticky notes, or coasters, to brainstorm these ideas. It might be a concept map such as this:



<https://getting-it-together.moadoph.gov.au/images/graphic-organisers/pdf/concept-map.pdf>

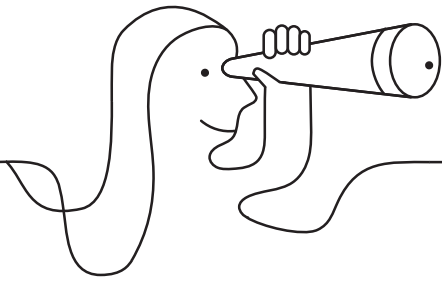
Maybe there are several answers to this and perhaps your network is offering lots of good things, not just one.



Some ideas for the why and what networks can do together are outlined below:

WHY	A PEER NETWORK MIGHT OFFER
<b>Share information with my peers</b>	Time to talk with each other A facebook page Regular peer guest speakers on topics of information Go together to events and ask questions
<b>Learn together from my peers</b>	Network sessions on topics of interests Going to a workshop together Running a workshop Researching information and sharing it online
<b>Provide mutual support</b>	Have regular meetings Share contact details for support in-between meetings Have a buddy system Develop Peer mentoring opportunities
<b>Develop personal connections</b>	Have social events and do things together in the community
<b>Work together for change</b>	Identify a shared passion and organise a campaign around it (eg. making your community more welcoming and accessible)
<b>Deal with challenges and plan for improvement</b>	A conversation with peers can uncover a whole array of different ways to solve a problem

We have left some space above because your reasons why might be different. And, perhaps people are asking for all of these things – your statement of purpose could be a combination of some or all of these things.



## Some examples of a statement of purpose

**Imagine More** in the ACT promotes its two peer group as:

- Self managing NDIS supports Peer Support Group: Share ideas and learn how to effectively and responsibly manage your NDIS supports without being overcome by exhaustion.
- Circle of Support Peer Support Group is a circle of support is a group of family and friends that gather around a person with a disability to help them achieve their good life goals.



<https://imaginemore.org.au/monthly-peer-support-groups/>

**Disability Elders of All Ages** is a peer group for people living with disability in South Australia. Its purpose is 'to share experiences, tips and ways of managing our lives', and includes a focus on building knowledge and skills in self-managed support.

## Getting your message out

Once everyone is happy with your statement of purpose, you have to get your message out.

A few sentences that clearly and simply state the why and what of the network are really useful. You can pin them up at every network meeting, you can have them upfront on your facebook page, you can have them printed on your fliers. Everyone can practice saying them and then everyone talks the same ways about the network, whether you are inviting new members or you try to get some resources from your local council.

You can read more about this in the **Peer Connect Quick Guide: Developing a value proposition:**



<https://www.peerconnect.org.au/setting-and-running-peer-networks/establishment/why-would-you-set-one/>

## Checklist for our statement of purpose

- It's easy to understand  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Every person knows about it  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Every person knows how they will benefit  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Unique to our network  
\_\_\_\_\_



**Hopefully this exercise means that you have checked in on the purpose of the peer network and why it is so important and thought about ways you can tell people about it. The blue bead can be threaded onto the string.**

It could be though that you still find the group is low on energy or that people are not as enthusiastic as they once were. Your peer group may need MORE ENERGY.

